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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 002506

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SUBJECT: PRT SHARANA: PAKTIKA PROVINCE SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT

REF: KABUL 1095

Classified By: Political Counselor SRosenberry for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Despite an active pro-Coalition governor, weak government and a 60 percent increase in insurgent attacks continue to hamper progress in Paktika, a province of 800,000 people on the Pakistan border. The provincial government is well-meaning but weak, and almost all development in the province is the result of U.S. efforts, with no UNAMA or other international donor presence. Educational opportunities are improving, including for women, but women still lack health care and secondary education opportunities.

To achieve progress, the governor must improve stability by limiting his constant reshuffling of district commissioners. The Afghan Uniformed Police needs stronger leadership and more U.S. mentoring. Until the government can prove its value by enhancing people's security and providing them better services and economic opportunity, government activity in Paktika will continue to lie where it always has -- in the hands of the tribal leaders. END SUMMARY

SECURITY

¶2. (S/REL ISAF) Paktika officials and community leaders perceive security in the province as getting worse every month. Although the hyped Taliban "spring offensive" was weak, insurgent attacks in the spring of 2007 were up 60 percent compared to spring 2006. (Insurgent attacks did decrease from 372 during the last half of 2006 to 278 in the first half of 2007, but this was expected due to the winter weather.) There were 60 IED attacks/incidents reported in the spring of 2007, compared to 35 in the spring of 2006. Direct fire attacks were up to 77 from 42, and there were 91 indirect fire attacks in 2007, up from 43 in 2006. The increase appears to be due to operations conducted by Coalition Forces during the early spring in 2007 that triggered responses from insurgents, as well as the Taliban's efforts to increase their operations.

¶3. (S/REL ISAF) The Coalition in Paktika includes two U.S. Infantry battalions, an Engineering battalion and brigade,

Military Police, the Provincial Reconstruction Team, and a Polish battalion that arrived in May and will eventually replace one of the U.S. infantry battalions. Afghan security forces include the Afghan Border Police (ABP), Afghan National Army (ANA), and Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP, a combination of the Auxiliary and National Police). The ABP commander claims there are 711 ABP in the province, although only about 420 are accounted for. In 2006, 479 ABP were present. The Afghan National Army (ANA) continues to have four Kandaks (battalions) in the province, with roughly 2200 soldiers. In 2006, there were 839 AUP authorized, with only 455 professionally trained police on hand, and an additional 294 non-professional contract police. According to the Provincial Police Chief, the system of hiring non-professional contract police has been discontinued, and there are currently 716 AUP in the province, a significant increase from 2006. To date in 2007, 230 have received professional training.

¶4. (C) The AUP are a critical weak spot in Paktika's security. The Provincial Chief of Police, General Zaizai, is not known to be corrupt, but he is also not known for being effective. District Chiefs of Police complain they are ignored when they try to alert him to Anti-Coalition Militia (ACM) in the province. Despite complaints from the Governor, the Ministry of Interior continues to send weak or corrupt Chiefs of Police to Paktika. When attacked by ACM, the police often flee along with their police chiefs. The Paktika Provincial Council leader commented to PRTOff that several Chiefs of Police have not been present at the time their district centers were attacked. He said he suspects they may be cooperating with ACM.

¶5. (C) The AUP need full-time embedded mentors, in the same way that the Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) have successfully

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mentored the Afghan National Army (ANA). A shortage of mentors, both military and civilian, and the challenging security environment, have limited deployments to contested areas. Five teams consisting of Dyncorps civilian mentors and military personnel, will be deployed in late July to seven key districts.

¶6. (C) Equipment has also been a problem. This spring, the U.S. distributed CODAN radios to police centers in each district, connecting districts to each other and to Sharana. However, the CODAN systems often become inoperable because of improper care and maintenance, and the AUP are not able to fix the systems themselves. (Note: During a recent CSTC-A/TF Phoenix-sponsored conference with senior MOI leaders, the ANP Regional Commanders acknowledged equipment maintenance is a problem and will work to address these issues. End Note)

POLITICAL SITUATION/GOVERNANCE

¶7. (SBU) Governor Dr. Mohammed Khpalwak has been in place since March 2006 and is considered capable, but is surrounded by weak officials. In an attempt to extend the reach of the government, the Governor has participated in shuras in nearly every district in the province. His outreach is not matched by the elected representatives. The three Meshrano Jirga members and four Wolsei Jirga members from Paktika rarely visit the province.

¶8. (C) The nine-member Provincial Council in Paktika remains weak and lacks influence. The Council members typically meet with the Governor only once a month. Ministry Directors rarely submit required reports on their activities to the Provincial Council. Many of the Provincial Council members, including the chief, live in Sharana instead of with the people they represent. Although 16 Directors represent the IRoA ministries in Paktika, they are weak and understaffed. It is rare for more than half to attend the weekly Provincial Development Committee meetings. Across the board, they are

underbudgeted and understaffed, and because they are not from Paktika and spend a great deal of time away from the province, they lack the all-important relationships with tribal leaders.

¶9. (C) While the Governor cannot change his weak Provincial Council, Directors, or Chiefs of Police, he hampers governance at the district level by constantly reshuffling his District Commissioners (sub-Governors). Rarely does a District Commissioner stay in one district for longer than six months. The District Commissioner in Bermel, for example, has been in Paktika since the beginning of the Karzai administration but has served in ten different districts. In the past six months, the Governor reshuffled eight District Commissioners within the province.

ECONOMIC/DEVELOPMENT SITUATION

¶10. (SBU) The Governor's top development priorities are roads, education, and irrigation. U.S. forces are addressing each of these priorities with approximately \$30 million in CERP assistance. To date, USAID has spent approximately \$15 million in Paktika and plans to significantly increase support through FY 2007 supplemental programs. Aside from Coalition assistance, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation/Development's National Solidarity Program (NSP) is currently the main source of Afghan development assistance in Paktika. The NSP is active in ten districts through its implementing partner BRAC and is beginning work in Gayan, Naka, and Zeruk, critical districts for the counterinsurgency. NSP has started 1,280 projects to date, 970 of which are complete. The NSP has provided assistance to approximately 80,000 families and aims to reach 100,000 families across the province. There is no commercial development. UNAMA is not present due to security concerns.

¶11. (SBU) In 2005 and 2006, U.S. forces built 190 kilometers of roads connecting the provincial capital to six key districts. U.S. forces are currently expanding this network by constructing several hundreds kilometers of roads

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connecting Sharana, Sar Hawza, and Orgun; Orgun and Gayan; Orgun, Sarobi, Rabat, and Bermel; Khayr Khot, Janikhel, and Kushamond; Khayr Khot and Yousef Khel, Dila, Kushamond, and Waza Kwa; and Gayan. The PRT is building four additional schools in Mata Khan, Sar Howza, and Bermel, as well as a vocational/technical training center in Sharana. In addition, the PRT is building two Centers for Educational Excellence (CEE's) to provide religious and secular education up through high school for 1500 students each, including dormitories. Four more future CEEs are planned.

¶12. (SBU) By the end of the summer construction season, each official district in the province will have a District Center, bringing a center of government to each official district outside Sharana. The PRT is also building an AM radio station to allow Paktika's government to reach more people than the current FM "Voice of Paktika" station. Other development projects include medical clinics, installation of solar lights, floodwalls, and hand pump wells. USAID is considering dam projects in Orgun district that will be critical to irrigation and flood protection in the province. Support will be provided through USAID's Local Government and Community Development Program (LGCD).

¶13. (SBU) Because of the lack of economic opportunities in Paktika, many people go to Pakistan to work as laborers. Villagers in Omna district told PRTOFF it is becoming more difficult, dangerous, and expensive to go back and forth to Pakistan. Prices of goods in the market reflect this same difficulty, as goods imported from Pakistan such as beef, chicken, and milk have become more expensive in the past

year, while prices of domestic goods have risen only slightly.

CULTURAL/SOCIAL SITUATION

¶14. (SBU) Governor Khpalwak is supportive of opportunities for Afghan women: the key will be access to education/training. There are currently 41 primary schools (no secondary schools) for girls in Paktika and a new one is under construction. This year, 65 women received tailoring training through the Ministry of Social Services, and previously the NSP distributed sewing machines to 2,000 women. Women have access to female health practitioners in only nine of Paktika's 23 districts. The Director for Women's Affairs stays primarily in Kabul and has not attended a weekly Provincial Development Council meeting in over a year.

¶15. (SBU) Education opportunities in Paktika are still limited, especially at the higher levels. Paktika currently has 17 high schools, 26 secondary schools, 263 primary schools, 41 primary schools for girls, and no universities. Paktika has only 4,313 teachers and administrative staff, and the shortage is most severe in rural areas. Educators in Paktika face considerable threats and intimidation due to working for the GOA, and in areas close to the border many teachers prefer to work in Pakistan, where the salary is higher than Paktika's salary of 2000 Afghani/month. Schools in at least five districts were burnt by ACM in 2005 and 2006; no schools have been burned in 2007.

¶16. (SBU) Paktika officials are increasingly concerned by the influx of refugees to the province, due to closure of camps in Pakistan. The Director of Refugees estimates 500-600 families have entered the province in the past year, mainly in the districts of Naka, Orgun, Zeruk, Bermal, Gayan, Sharana, and Yaya Khel. Many returning Afghans are unable to obtain employment. Without jobs or strong ties to Afghanistan, officials are concerned that refugees may harbor or assist insurgents as a way to earn money.

COMMENT

¶17. (C) Paktika's leadership admits that the people of this traditionally ignored province have little no faith in the government. They look to either God -- or the U.S. -- as the major presence in the province for help. Until the government can prove its value by enhancing people's security and providing them greater education and economic

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opportunity, government activity in Paktika will continue to lie where it always has -- in the hands of the tribal leaders.

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